

Priest: A Minister Ordained to be the Good Shepherd

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Introduction

The use of metaphors was much common in the ancient cultures. The people of antiquity used the metaphors, images, symbols and signs to describe the inexplicable ideas and concepts. The metaphor by definition means that a known object is used in order to explain or describe an unknown abstract thing.¹ In order to explain the unknown realities the people of ancient past made use of the metaphors. The Biblical world is not an exception to such tradition. The Bible, which is like a magical mirror, shows to us, the modern people, the growth and the development of fine arts and the literary forms, the customs, practices, religious beliefs, convictions and the cultures of the ancient societies, especially those societies lived in the Mediterranean terrain. The Bible is also rich in metaphors, images etc. If we study the Bible from the literary point of view we can come across innumerable metaphors. The special nature of these metaphors is that they all emerged from the ordinary life situation of the people of Israel.

The tropical Mediterranean landscape receives scarce and inadequate rainfall. Added to that, both in the east and the south of the Mediterranean Sea one can see the desert stretching out for miles. Such climatic condition can be of very little help for the cultivation of crops. The main source of livelihood then for the people living in this area in the ancient times was shepherding the herds and the cattle containing cows, sheep, goats, horses, asses, camels etc. The economy of the society also depended much on those trades attached to the

¹ H.W. Flower and F.G. Fowler (First edition), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary, Thumb Index Edition* (8th edition) by R.E. Allen (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1990).

herds, flocks and the cattle. In order to find grasslands for the cattle, the people have to travel from pillar to post. In tune with such nomadic condition of the biblical people, the biblical writers used plenty of metaphors, stories, proverbs, which are much related to their nomadic and agrarian cultures. One such metaphor that we regularly come across in the biblical narratives is the "Shepherd" metaphor. The "Shepherd" metaphor is widely used not only in the Hebrew world (Psalm 23 and 34th chapter of Ezekiel), but also in the New Testament Christian world. The early Christians knowing the importance of this metaphor called Jesus, the "Good Shepherd" (10th chapter of the gospel of John). In this essay we shall analyse the various nuances of the metaphor of the "Shepherd" used both in the Biblical and the Christian worlds with the purpose of exploring the possibilities of drawing inspirations for the functions and missions of the ministers of today's Church.

The Usage of the Phrase "Shepherd" in the Ancient Near Eastern World

Mesopotamia: Long before the beginning of the biblical history, the "Shepherd" image was very commonly used to the kings and the gods in the regions of Mesopotamia. The king as a shepherd is expected to be good, just, kind and compassionate in guiding and ruling his subjects. He also had to be beneficent for his people. The epic hero Enmerkar, the king of Uruk, is called the shepherd and the beloved provider. The People in the epic story of Gilgamesh questioned the famous Gilgamesh whether he was really a shepherd since he was a tyrant king. Ur-Nammu (ca. 2111–2094 B.C.) who is known for the first law code of the world is also called the shepherd of his people. Lipit-Ishtar (ca. 1934-1924 B.C.), another king's name associated with the Mesopotamian law code, is also called the humble shepherd of Nippur. Hammurabi of Babylon called himself the shepherd in several places in the prologue and epilogue of his law code. Besides the kings, many of the Mesopotamian deities are also known as shepherds. Marduk, the Babylonian creation epic god, is called the faithful

shepherd. The people of Mesopotamia called the Semitic sun god Utu the shepherd of the lower world and the guardian of the upper world.

Egypt: Even though the concept and thought of the kings and the gods as the shepherds were widespread, the use of this terminology was a rare occurrence in the Egyptian literary world. The recent archaeological excavation discloses to us that the insignia of the kings, the princes and the chieftains had the figure of the crook and staff of the shepherd. The crook is also found on monuments, sarcophagi, pillars, pylons and artefacts of every period of Egyptian kingdom. Osiris, the dead god, whom the Egyptians believed to be the image of the ruler of the world to come, is depicted as the shepherd who tended his flock and protected his subjects. An inscription in the Karnak temple has attributed Amenhotep III (ca. 1411–1374 B.C.) the good shepherd. It reveals to us that the Egyptian culture like its Mesopotamian counterpart was also aware of the “Shepherd” image.

Greece: The phrase “the shepherd of the host” appearing in both Iliad and Odyssey, the ancient works of Homer, the 8 century B.C. Greek poet, to describe various individuals serving both in Greek and Trojan military, is a proof to tell us that the “Shepherd” image was also a common symbolism in the Hellenistic world. Aeschylus, the 6th century B.C. Greek dramatist, called a storm in the sea an evil shepherd and he called the captains of the ships as the shepherds of ships. Euripides, the 5th century B.C. Greek dramatist, called Theseus, the ruler of Athens, as young and valiant shepherd. Plato, the 5th century B.C. Greek Philosopher, also used the symbolism of the shepherd and flock in his Republic and ascertained that the ruler who was like a shepherd must do good to his subjects. Many of the ancient Greek literatures deviated themselves from the attraction and glamour of the city cultures to the pastoral panorama and created the heroes of their dramas and poetry as the herdsmen and shepherds.

The Occurrences of the Phrase “Shepherd” in the Bible

The Hebrew Bible uses two phrases interchangeably to mean the “Shepherd” namely, - נָקַד (noqed) and רֹעָה (ro‘eh). “נָקַד” (noqed) is

used twice as noun to mean literally the shepherd, herdsman and sheep –dealer (2 Kg 3:4; Am 1:1). But “רעה” (ro‘eh) and its derivatives like its Ancient Near Eastern word forms are used in the Hebrew Bible not only to mean the shepherd, but also to denote the royal leader or ruler, any human leader, the official member of court, royal companion, neighbour, friend, female friend etc. “רעה” (ro‘eh) and its derivatives occur many times in the Hebrew Bible and they mean at least 100 times the shepherd² both literally and metaphorically³. The speciality of “רעה” (ro‘eh) in the Hebrew Bible is that it as a metaphor refers to both God and human being.

The Septuagint and the New Testament has the Greek word ποιμην (poimen) to mean the shepherd. New Testament has totally 18 usages of the Greek word ποιμην (poimen).⁴ This Greek phrase like its Hebrew counterpart is also used both literally and metaphorically in the Bible. If we examine all the occurrences of the Hebrew and the Greek forms of the phrase “Shepherd” both in the Old Testament and the New Testament we shall arrive at the conclusion that this phrase is almost all the times used to imply either literally or metaphorically the leaders of the Israelite society or nation.

The Understanding of “Shepherd” in the Bible

The Hebrew phrase “נקד” (noqed) points out literally the profession of a person as a shepherd alone in both the occasions of its usage.

² I. Cornelius, “נקד” and Louis Jonker – I. Cornelius – Richard S. Hess, “רעה” in Willem A. VanGemeren (Gen. ed.), DOTE -Vol. 3 (Grand rapids: Michigan, 1997) 151, 1138 – 1149.

³ In the 34th chapter of Ezekiel, the Hebrew word from “רעה” (ro‘eh) occurs 31 times and in the 11th chapter of Zechariah it appears 10 times. In Gen 29:9, “רעה” (ro‘eh) refers to the female shepherd.

⁴ The following are the 18 occurrences of the Greek word ποιμην (poimen) in the NT: Mt 9:36; 25:32; 26:31; Mk 6:34; 14:27; Lk 2:8,15,18, 20; Jn 10:2; 11²,12, 14,16; Eph 4:11; Heb 13:20; 1Pet 2:25. αρχιποιμην (archipoimen) is used once in 1Pt 5:4.

On the contrary, “רעה” (ro‘eh) with its various derivatives in the Hebrew Bible principally mean the shepherd both literally and metaphorically.⁵ In its metaphorical sense the phrase “Shepherd” in the Hebrew Bible implies not only the rulers or the leaders of the nation, the religious leaders and the priests of the Israelite society, but in many occasions it also refers to God. The same principle is applicable also to the Greek phrase ποιμην (poimen) of the Septuagint. In the case of New Testament ποιμην (poimen) is used in the metaphorical sense to imply the Jewish authority, religious leaders and the leaders of the early Church. It also specifically refers to Jesus and his leadership. In that case, the “Shepherd” image in both the Old Testament and the New Testament first of all means literally the shepherd who lived in the Ancient Near Eastern territory and his life conditions. Secondly, in its metaphorical sense it refers to all the leaders of the people of Israel, especially, the religious leaders and the rulers of the Israelite and Jewish nation who have to behave like the good, simple and kind shepherds of their age. Thirdly, the “Shepherd” metaphor is applied to God, Jahweh, in the Old Testament and to Jesus in the New Testament.

Based on these above observations the questions that arise in our minds are the following:

What was the role of the shepherds in the day-to-day life situation of the Israelite society?

What would be the actual reasons for the biblical authors to use the “Shepherd” metaphor in the biblical writings?

How far did the biblical authors succeed in relating the “Shepherd” metaphor with the leaders and rulers of the people of Israel?

What was the speciality of this metaphor in applying it to God in the Old Testament and to Jesus in the New Testament?

⁵ “רעה” (ro‘eh) occurs in the Hebrew Bible in the following meanings other than “shepherd”: friend – Jud 14:20; Prov 22:24; 2 Sam 15:37; 16: 16; 1Kg 4:5; companion – Jud 11:37,38; Ps 45:14; Est 1:19; Isa 34:15,16; Prov 13:20; 28:7; 29:3; neighbour – Ex 10:2; Jer 9:20; Zech 11:9.

How can we understand this “Shepherd” image today and apply it to the present Church leadership?

The Literal Understanding of “Shepherd” in the Bible

As we have seen earlier the main livelihood of the people of the Ancient Near Eastern cultures was shepherding. The ancient Israelites were a pastoral people. Bible gives the detailed information about the cultural, social and economic life situation of the shepherds. No community of ancient times gets so much attention in the Bible as that of the shepherds. In the biblical world the word “Shepherd” literally has meant those people who were to feed, to tend and to shepherd the flock. Abel was a keeper of sheep (Gen 4:2). Abraham, the forefather of the people of Israel, had also the flock, herds and tents (Gen 13: 5). Before God called Moses with the view to liberate the people of Israel from Egypt, Moses was keeping the flock of his father in Law (Ex 3:1). David was also keeping the sheep before Samuel anointed him as king (1Sam 16:11). During the nomadic life of the patriarchal period shepherding the flocks was done by all the members of the family. Even the female members were grazing the flock in the nearby regions of their dwelling.

The Conditions of the Shepherds: The life conditions of the shepherd people were very hard.⁶ The shepherds had to live generally in tents (Gen 4:20; Ex 36:14). In search of the pastureland to the flock the shepherd had to move away from his base for a long time. He had to spend long nights and days alone with his flock. Whether it was rain, cold, wind or hot summer, he accompanied the flock. His only companions in such circumstances were his own flock. He had to entertain himself sometimes by talking to the sheep until they all recognise his voice (Jn 10:4) and also by making music on reed pipes (Jug 5:16). A responsible shepherd would never kill a sheep from his flock no matter how rigorous conditions might arise (Gen 31:38-40;

⁶ Paul Leslie Garber, “Sheep; Shepherd”, in Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Gen. Ed.), ISBE – Vol. 4, Revised Edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1988) 463-464.

Ezek 34:2,10; Am 7:12). The shepherd had to count his flock both in the morning and evening one by one calling each one in the flock by its own name (Jn 10:3), because it was his duty to give account to his master about the missing ones (Gen 31:39; 1 Sam 25:15,21). The shepherd never had off duty. The gazing area of the flock had no protected walls. The sheep in the flock were liable to stray away and to get lost since either side of the mountain was steep and sharp. That is why the flock had to be watched constantly. There used to be generally the dogs going along with the shepherds for protection. But it was the shepherd who personally controlled the flock by his whistle or shout (Is 5:26). Normally, it was the shepherd who is supposed to lead the flock (Ps 23:2; Jn 10:3-5). But at times there were also the under shepherds, who used to come behind the flock (2 Sam 7:8; 1 Chr 17:7; Am 7:15) in order to help the tired ones and the young ones. The high point of shepherding was that the shepherd had to risk his own life in order to protect his flock (Jn 10:11). In such a situation the shepherd might not turn up alive from shepherding (Gen 37:33). His job was a dangerous one that he had to guard the sheep against cold, the wild animals, wolves, thieves and robbers (Ps 78:70; Mic 2:12; Jn 10:1). Constant watch, fearlessness and patient love were the required characteristics of the shepherd.

The Shepherds' Equipments: The Bible also speaks about the kits and the tools that a shepherd would possess while shepherding his flock. The first and the important one was the **Scrip**. It was a bag made out of the skin of an animal (1 Sam 17:40, 49) to keep his food. He could store in the bag such as bread, dried fruits, olives, cheese, oil etc for his nourishment. Olive oil or the fat of the animal is needed as ointment (Is 1:6; Jer 8:22) in case of emergency, if a sheep got injured or hurt itself by foolishly wandering the dangerous areas (Ezek 34:5; Mt 12: 11; Lk 15:4). The second one was the **Sling**. It was a weapon of defence. A shepherd was capable in such a way that he could sling a stone at a hair and he would not miss the target (Jug 20:16). Book of Samuel narrates how David was skilful with the slingshot (1 Sam 17:49). The third one was the **Staff**. It was a short wooden club, which had a

lump of wood at the one end and often studded with nails. It was used as a weapon to protect and to defend both himself and the flock from the thieves and the beasts. The fourth one was the **Rod**. It was the shepherd's crook to pull back the sheep that goes astray. At the end of the day the shepherd held his rod across the entrance of the sheepfold and the sheep passed under it (Ezek 20:37; Lev 27:32). It was done in order to find out if a sheep is injured.

The Sheepfold: The sheepfold is the place where the shepherd gathered his sheep into a fold at night for protection against wild animals, cold and the thieves. The sheepfolds are of various types. Some are located in or near the cave (1Sam 24:3). Some consisted of a courtyard with a fence or a wall of stone around them. Some others had simply an open enclosure surrounded with the thorn bush on all the sides. There might not be any permanent gate to the sheepfold. The shepherd himself guarded at night lying down across the single opening (Jn 10:7,9). He remained there as a gate to the sheep. In such a condition, it would be the shepherd who would be attacked first if a thief or a wild animal had ventured an entry.

Sheep shearing Ceremony: It was an important day for the shepherd. It was like the harvest feast celebrated by the farmers. Annually it took place in the spring season. The first of the fleece was given to the levites (Deut 18:4). On that day, the owner of the sheep travelled even to a far away place in order to be with his sheep and to supervise the ceremony (Gen 31:19-23; 38:12; 2Sam 13:23). It was a family feast and all the relatives and friends of the shepherd participated and joined in the feast meal that followed (1Sam 25: 2-11,36; 2Sam 13: 23-29).

The Figurative Meaning of the “Shepherd” in the Bible

The “Shepherd” imagery in the Bible is of course to be attributed to the earliest semi nomadic life of the Israelite society when the people of Israel were tending the flock. But as we have mentioned earlier in the article such nomadic life at that time was not special to the people of Israel alone. The main livelihood of the whole of Ancient Near

Eastern cultures was also through shepherding. But the cultures other than the Israelite did not speak much about the “Shepherd” imagery. Even in the Hebrew Bible the “Shepherd” image is not spread in the entire book. Other than Psalms (Ps 23; 28:9; 68:7; 74:1; 77:20; 78:52; 80:1; 95:7; 100:3; 121:4) and Song of Solomon (Song 1:8) this image is not known in the Wisdom Literatures. Even in Pentateuch and Prophets we come across the “Shepherd” image mainly in the Exodus stories and in the consoling prophecy of the Exile.⁷ It explains to us that the shepherd thought in spite of being well known already in the early stage of Israelite culture, could have entered as imagery in the Israelite literature (exception could be Ps 23) only in the later period. In that case, one should look beyond the cultural and social aspect of the people of Israel to understand the meaning of the “Shepherd” imagery. The “Shepherd” imagery should have gained importance in the lives of the people of Israel and the biblical narratives because of the personal and social convictions of the people of Jahweh with reference to the functions, the qualities and the characters of a shepherd. The “Shepherd” imagery is used in the Bible (OT and NT) to imply God, Jesus and the human leader.

God as Shepherd: The tradition of attributing the “Shepherd” image to God, Jahweh, has different stages of development – from Exodus experience to exilic and from exilic to post exilic experience. It originated already during the desert experience of the people of Israel and they named their God, “The Shepherd, Rock of Israel” (Gen 49:24). In contrast to the authoritarian and totalitarian kingdom in Egypt, the people of Jahweh have seen their God of Exodus leading them out of Egypt like a sheep, guiding them in the wilderness and letting them into the promise land in safety (Ps 78:52-53). The song of Moses portrays the image of God as a shepherd leading the people to safe pastures (Ex 15:13,17).

⁷ Joachim Jeremias, “ποιμην, αρχιποιμην, ποιμαινω”, G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (ed.), translation in English Geoffrey W. Bromiley, in TDOT – Vol. VI (Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1968) 487.

During the Babylonian captivity the people of Jahweh expressed their hope and desire to God, Jahweh, to remain as a shepherd to them as he was during their wilderness experience at Sinai. Ps 23 portrays how God, Jahweh, as shepherd kept his loyalty and fidelity in accordance with the aspiration of the people of Israel and he even cared for the individual sheep who in his suffering and affliction during the Babylonian captivity looked for the protection and guidance of this saving God, Jahweh. The people of Israel in the Babylonian captivity expected their God like a shepherd to guide the sheep, to feed them with food, to water them with fresh water, to lead them to good pastures, to watch over them from their captors, to care for them in their affliction, to seek the lost ones, to rescue the ones gone astray, and to gather them together in order to take them to their own land.

During the post-exilic period the "Shepherd" motif underwent an interesting development. The immediate functions of Jahweh as a shepherd to his people after the exile were placed on a priority basis. Jahweh like a shepherd had to bring back the strayed ones; he had to bind the wounded ones; the duty of Jahweh was to strengthen the weak ones; he had to carry the lambs in his bosom (Is 40:11).

Leader of Israel as Shepherd: One has to admit that unlike the other Ancient Near Eastern cultures the leaders of Israel, both the Patriarchs and the kings were never directly called by the title "Shepherd". But the "Shepherd" image is implied in the shepherding of the people of Israel by king David (2Sam 5:2). In the parable narrated by Nathan to David, he portrayed David as an owner of the flock and he condemned the king for unjustly usurping the sheep of a poor shepherd. By doing so Nathan exercised for the first time in the history of Israelite kings the role of a prophet by boldly criticising the bad leadership (2Sam 12:1-15). Later in the history of the northern kingdom the prophet Micaiah foretold the death of Ahab and the defeat of Israel and said that the army of Ahab would be scattered "as a sheep which have no shepherd" (1Kg 22:7; 2Chr 18:16; Ezek 34:5; cf. Num 27:16,17).

The tradition of prophets implying the “Shepherd” imagery to the kings and the religious leaders of Israel picked up during 8 – 6 century B.C. Jeremiah not only ascribed the religious and political authorities to the shepherd whose flock would be scattered because of the stupidity and arrogance of the leaders (Jer 10:21; 25:34-38), but also called the Babylonian commanders and the captors as shepherd who would destroy the flock of Jahweh (Jer 6:3; 12:10). Ezekiel promised a shepherd like David. He is expected to be the Messiah who would exercise the functions of the shepherd in leading his people to good pastures. The expected shepherd leader would not continue the injustices done by the pre-exilic shepherd-kings. The promised shepherd leader would not exploit the lives of his sheep, but would offer his own life for the welfare of his sheep (Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25). Zechariah out-rightly criticised the leaders as the worthless shepherds who neither cared for the perishing nor healed the maimed. He also condemned them for their insensitivity to the flock (Zech 11:15-17). In fact, the post-exilic “Shepherd” motif gave a twist to the messianic understanding of the shepherd leader. Thus, the political overtone of messianic leader gradually has taken the back seat and the ethical and social roles of the expected messianic shepherd leader were emphasised.

Jesus as Good Shepherd: While the Old Testament attributed the “Shepherd” imagery to God and the leaders of Israel, the New Testament applies this imagery to Jesus and calls him the Good Shepherd (Jn 10: 11,14). Greek language has two phrases to mean “good”. The first word is “αγαθος” (agathos) which denotes the moral quality of a thing or person. It can mean strong or efficiency or loyalty. The second word is “καλος” (kalos) which implies the goodness with loveliness of a thing or person. The Greek word used in the gospel of John to translate “good” here is “καλος” (kalos).⁸ In that case when Jesus is called “Good Shepherd” he is not merely meant as a strong or

⁸ The Letter to Hebrews calls Jesus the “Great Shepherd” (Heb 13:20) and Peter in his Letter calls Jesus the “Chief Shepherd” (1Pt 5:4). The Greek word used in the Letter to

efficient or loyal shepherd, but a shepherd with a loving, kind, merciful, gracious and listening heart. When the Synoptic Gospels use the "Shepherd" imagery it implies the *compassionate leadership* of Jesus (Mt 9:36; Mk 6:34) and the *sacrificing nature of the leadership* of Jesus (Mt 26:31; Mk 14:27). In the Gospel of John the *true or real nature of the leadership* of Jesus (Jn 10:2,11,12,14,16) and the *sacrificing or life-giving nature of the leadership* of Jesus (Jn 10:12) are emphasised. Picturing Jesus as the shepherd who is ready to sacrifice himself for the sheep could be looked back to the "Shepherd" figure in the Old Testament. David was even ready to risk his own life for saving the lamb from the lion (1 Sam 17:34-35). Zechariah also speaks of the shepherd who is to be sacrificed for the sake of his sheep (Zech 11:7).

When we say that Jesus is like a compassionate shepherd, it means that he is not merely showing his sentiment towards "the helpless and bewildered crowd",⁹ but involves himself actively in caring for them and providing them with what is necessary. As a true shepherd he knows his sheep. He calls each of the sheep by name. He goes ahead of the sheep. The sheep not only follow him but also hear his voice. He also becomes the gate for the sheep. Above all as a sacrificing shepherd Jesus is ready to lay down his life for the sake of the sheep. He does not bother about risking his life in guarding the sheep. In positively explaining the true leadership of Jesus the gospel writers also warn the danger of the false shepherd who can bring disaster to the entire sheep.

The "Shepherd" Model of Today's Priestly ministry

Both the OT and the NT give us the clear picture of what kind of approach a pastor should have towards his flock. The "Shepherd" imagery used both in the OT and the NT not only emphasises the true

⁹ L. Legrand, "The Good Shepherd in the Gospel of Mark", *Indian Theological Studies*, Vol. XXIV/3 (1992) 239.

nature of a leader of the society in which we live, but also enlightens us in the functions and qualities of a Christian pastor. It also emphasises that the growth, progress and the development of Jesus community rests neither in the military power and muscle power like that of the Caesars and the Herods nor in the religious and the social arrogance like that of the Jewish leaders, but only in the kind, loving and compassionate approach like that of a "Good Shepherd". Like the shepherd of the Bible he has to face myriads of challenges in leading his flock and protecting them in danger. In tune with the functions and character of the Good Shepherd the pastors are called not to boss over the sheep, but to be compassionate leaders. Like the false shepherds the pastors are not to make use of the sheep for their own welfare and advantage, but they are to sacrifice their lives for the welfare and good of the flock. Not like the hirelings who neither know the sheep nor lead the sheep ahead, the pastors are called to be true or real shepherds who are ready to be responsible for of the sheep.

The Challenges of Being a Pastor Today

In the following manner, we can categorise the challenges that a minister of God would face today in his ministry:

1) The danger of *becoming a careerist* is a biggest challenge a pastor would face in Church today. A careerist makes every work into business and aims at cashing in on the mission entrusted to him for his own personal achievements. On the other hand, to be a minister of the people is an invitation for a selfless service to the people and for transparency in the public life. In such a way of life there is no place for personal gains and motives of a pastor. A shepherd looks at his job not as a career, but as a service. He is committed not to his welfare but to the welfare of his sheep. The spirituality of a pastor also rests solely on the pastor's total commitment to the community of people he serves.

2) In the history of Church there was always a danger of a pastor *becoming a man of rituals and sacrifices*. In such a case, a pastor is contented in the mere administration of some rituals and sacrifices. He will be like a shepherd who neglects his sheep instead of leading them to the pastures and caring them in their need. In such a case, shepherding becomes a mere ritual practice for the shepherd. The rituals and the sacrifices have their expected meaning only in association with the person who is doing them. It is not in doing the rituals and sacrifices, but in becoming himself a sacrifice to God that a person fulfils his mission as a pastor.

3) Another shift in the attitude of a pastor in the Church today is that he aspires *to be in high positions than to serve the people*. Power and positions become the highest good to achieve. But a shepherd-leader is like the suffering servant of Jahweh of second Isaiah. He finds his meaning of life in the selfless service to his sheep. The Church for which a pastor works or with which he associates himself is not a power-centred but a service-centred institution. Jesus, the supreme leader of the Church invited his people not to call him a leader, or a teacher, but a servant. Jesus is a servant leader. The Pastor is also called to be a servant leader.

4) The challenge of *being a builder of a community* is not an easy job for a pastor. Like a shepherd who searches for the lost ones and gathers all the sheep, the pastor should aim at gathering all and even the missed ones. Recently, it has become a novelty for a pastor to spend most of his energy and money in developing the Church structures and institutions. In such a case, the pastor *becomes a builder of the Church structures*. The apostle, Peter, calls every believer a living corner stone and tells that each one be built into a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5). Paul tells that each believer in Christ is a temple of God (1Cor 3:16). Every pastor must know that it is to build a Jesus community that a he is chosen and called.

The Good Pastor and the Good Shepherd

If the “Shepherd” image in the Bible gives us such an above-mentioned portrait of a leader and describes us the challenges that a leader would face, a pastor who is called to be a leader of either the local Church or the universal Church has lot more to learn from this “Shepherd” imagery. The “Shepherd” image has the following three insights to inspire the pastoral ministry of a priest

1) Emerging from the OT thought pattern of the “Shepherd” image a pastor is a man having *the soul of a shepherd*. A shepherd is known for his compassion and kindness towards his sheep. He cannot bear his sheep suffer. His heart and soul would be in the welfare of a shepherd. The OT expected the leader of every kind to be a shepherd. A king in spite of having wide range of military power and wealth should have the heart of a shepherd. David who had the heart of a shepherd was a successful king. He was even able to widen his kingdom beyond Jordan. But Solomon who had the arrogance of city culture and had faith only in the military power was not successful like his father, David. The kingdom got divided immediately after the death of Solomon. Since the prophets like the shepherds were compassionate and kind they were able to emerge all of a sudden from the society and were able to raise their voice against injustice of the kings and the leaders and stood firm for bringing back justice in the society.

2) The pastor is one who is like Jesus, the Good Shepherd, *called not only to live but also to die for others*. To live for others is not that difficult. It expects from a person who is ready to live for others a little more sacrifice. But to die for the sake of others is much more challenging than a simple sacrifice of our wealth or time. To die for others is the speciality of the “Shepherd” model that Jesus proposes. A total application of the pastor in the service of the people is intended in this model. First of all, the shepherd remaining as the gate for the sheep risks his life before the wild animals and the thieves. Any animal or a thief can touch the sheep only after crossing over the shepherd (Jn 10:7). Secondly, the shepherd goes in front of the sheep. In such

case the shepherd is ready to face the danger first, before it comes to the sheep (Jn 10:3). Thirdly, the shepherd is ready even to the utmost sacrifice of laying down his life. It shows the love and care a shepherd has for his sheep (Jn 10: 11,14).

3) The pastor should *own his sheep*. This is a big challenge in today's world. In recent times there is a danger of seeing the priestly ministry as a part time profession. One looks at the priestly ministry from the point of view of a clerical job. Because of such developments the relationship between the parishners and the minister of the Church becomes so mechanical that the priest becomes purely a ritual figure. His missionary spirit recedes slowly. The relationship between the priest and the faithful is lost. But the Good Shepherd is a different kind. He is able to relate himself well with his sheep. He is even able to know each of his sheep by name (Jn 10:3). The sheep are able to listen to him and they also know his voice (Jn 10:5,16). As far as the sheep is concerned he never considered himself like a hireling (Jn 10:12). But he acknowledged himself as a responsible owner of the sheep.

Conclusion

If we search the whole of Bible, there is no imagery that we would find, so pregnant with meaning than this "Shepherd" imagery. It has never become an outdated model. As we have discussed earlier this imagery is meaningful even today and applicable to the present situations of our leadership. In the biblical history, it explained why the people of Israel in spite of their constant failures in the political sphere were able to stick on to God Jahweh. Their total failure as the people of Jahweh was redefined in the compassionate and kind "Shepherd" image of God Jahweh. In the New Testament this imagery gave a new meaning to the mission and life of the disciples of Jesus. Jesus redefined his messianic mission as a suffering servant and not as a glorious Messiah. In the same way, we should also redefine the present priestly ministry and the mission in the light of the "Shepherd" imagery.

The "Shepherd" imagery implies that a priest or a pastor of today has to have the kind, compassionate and consoling soul of a shepherd. He can find the complete meaning in his life only in sacrificing his time, resource and energy for his people.